

QUESTION 40

The Persons in Comparison to the Relations or Properties

Next we ask about the persons in comparison to the relations or properties. There are four questions: (1) Is a relation the same as a person? (2) Do the relations distinguish and constitute the persons? (3) If the relations are intellectually abstracted from the persons, do distinct hypostases still remain? (4) Do the relations conceptually presuppose the acts of the persons, or vice versa?

Article 1

Is a relation the same as a person?

It seems that in God a relation is not the same as a person:

Objection 1: If things are the same, then if one of them is multiplied, the other is likewise multiplied. But it is possible for there to be more than one relation in one person; for instance, the Paternity and the Common Spiration exist in the person of the Father. Again, it is possible for there to be one relation that exists in two persons; for instance, the Common Spiration is in the Father and in the Son. Therefore, a relation is not the same as a person.

Objection 2: According to the Philosopher in *Physics* 4, nothing exists within itself. But a relation exists in a person. And one cannot claim that the relation exists in the person by reason of identity, since if that were so, then the relation would exist in the essence as well. Therefore, a relation or property is not the same as a person in God.

Objection 3: If things are the same, then they are such that whatever is predicated of the one is likewise predicated of the other. But it is not the case that whatever is predicated of a person is predicated of His property. For instance, we say that the Father generates, but we do not say that the Paternity generates. Therefore, a property is not the same as a person in God.

But contrary to this: As Boethius puts it in *De Hebdomadibus*, in God *that which is (quod est)* does not differ from *that by which it is (quo est)*. But the Father is the Father by the Paternity. Therefore, the Father is the Paternity. And, for the same reason, the other properties are the same as the persons.

I respond: On this matter there have been different opinions.

Some have claimed that the properties neither *are* the persons nor are *in* the persons. They were motivated to say this by the mode of signifying had by relational names, since such names signify a thing not as being *in* something (*in aliquo*), but rather as being *with respect to* something (*ad aliquid*). Hence, as was explained above (q. 28, a. 2), they called the relations ‘bystanders’ (*assistantes*).

However, since (a) insofar as a relation is a certain thing in God, it is the essence itself, and since (b), as is clear from what has been said (q. 39, a. 1), the essence is the same as a person, it must be the case that a relation is the same as a person.

Thus, others, taking this identity into account, claimed that, to be sure, the properties *are* the persons, but they are not *in* the persons. For, as was noted above (q. 32, a. 2), they posited the properties in God only as a manner of speaking.

However, as was explained above in the same place, one must say that the properties are *in* God and that they are signified in the abstract as the forms of the persons. Hence, since it is part of the nature of a form that it exists *in* that of which it is the form, one must say that the properties are *in* the persons and yet that they *are* the persons. In the same way, we say that the essence is *in* God and yet that the essence *is* God.

Reply to objection 1: A person and a property are the same in reality, but they differ conceptually.

Hence, it need not be the case that if the one is multiplied, the other is also multiplied.

Still, note that because of God's simplicity, there are two types of real identity in God among things that differ from one another in creatures:

(a) Since God's simplicity excludes a composition of *form* and *matter*, it follows that in God the *abstract* is the same as its *concrete* counterpart; for instance, the divinity is the same as God.

(b) Since God's simplicity excludes a composition of *subject* and *accident*, it follows that whatever is attributed to God is His essence. Because of this, wisdom and power are the same in God, since both exist in the divine essence.

It is because of this twofold character of identity that a property in God is the same as a person:

(a) The properties that constitute the persons (*properitates personales*) are the same as the persons by reason of the fact that the *abstract* is the same as the *concrete*. For the properties are the subsistent persons themselves; in particular, the Paternity is the Father Himself, and the Filiation is the Son, and the Procession is the Holy Spirit.

(b) On the other hand, the properties that do not constitute the persons are the same as the persons by the second type of identity, in virtue of which everything that is attributed to God is His essence. So, then, the Common Spiration is the same as the person of the Father and the person of the Son, not because the Common Spiration is a single person subsisting *per se*, but because just as the one essence exists in the two persons, so too the one property exists in the two persons—as was explained above (q. 30, a. 2).

Reply to objection 2: The properties are said to be in the *essence* only in the mode of identity. However, they are said to be in the *persons* in the mode of identity not only with respect to their reality, but also with respect to their mode of signifying, viz., the mode of signifying something as a form in a suppositum. This is why the properties determine the persons and make for distinct persons, but do not make for distinct essences.

Reply to objection 3: Participles and verbs pertaining to the notions signify the notional acts, and acts belong to supposita. The properties, however, are signified not as supposita, but as the forms of supposita; and so the properties' mode of signifying prevents the participles and verbs pertaining to the notions from being predicated of the properties.

Article 2

Do the relations constitute the persons and make them distinct?

It seems that the persons are not made distinct by the relations:

Objection 1: Simple things are distinct through themselves. But the divine persons are maximally simple. Therefore, they are made distinct through themselves and not by the relations.

Objection 2: A form is distinct only with respect to its own genus; for instance, *white* is distinct from *black* only with respect to the genus *quality*. But 'hypostasis' signifies an individual in the genus *substance*. Therefore, the hypostases are not made distinct by the relations.

Objection 3: What is absolute is prior to what is relational. But the distinction among the divine persons is a primary distinction. Therefore, the divine persons are not made distinct by the relations.

Objection 4: That which presupposes a given distinction cannot be the primary source of that distinction. But a relation presupposes a distinction among the persons, since the definition of 'relation' posits that the *esse* of a relation is *to be with respect to another*. Therefore, a relation cannot be the primary source of a distinction in God.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* Boethius says that the relations alone multiply the Trinity of divine persons.

I respond: When something is common to a plurality of things, it is necessary to look for something distinctive. Hence, since the three persons agree in oneness of essence, it is necessary to look for something by which they are made distinct in such a way as to be a plurality.

Now there are two things in which the divine persons differ from one another, viz., their origins and their relations. Even though these two things do not differ in reality, they nonetheless differ in their mode of signifying. For origins are signified in the mode of an act, e.g., generation, whereas relations are signified in the mode of a form, e.g., Paternity.

Thus, there have been some who, noticing that a relation follows upon an act, have claimed that the hypostases in God are made distinct from one another by their origins, and that the reason we say that the Father is distinct from the Son is that the one generates and the other is begotten. On the other hand, the distinctions among the hypostases (or persons) are made manifest after the fact by the relations (or properties)—in much the same way that the distinctions among individual creatures are effected by their material principles and are then made manifest by their properties.

However, there are two reasons why this position cannot be maintained.

First, in order for two things to be understood as distinct from one another, it is necessary that the distinction between them be understood through something intrinsic to them both—in the way that, among created things, the distinctions among them are understood through their matter or through their form. However, the origin of a thing is not signified as something intrinsic to it, but is instead signified as a certain path (*via*) from a thing or to a thing. For instance, generation is signified as a certain path that leads to the thing that is generated and that proceeds from the thing that generates it. Hence, it cannot be the case that the generated thing is made distinct from the generating thing by the act of generation alone; instead, one must grasp within both the generating thing and the generated thing those features in virtue of which they are distinct from one another. Now within a divine person one can grasp only the essence and the relation (or property). Hence, since the divine persons agree in the essence, it follows that it is through the relations that the persons are made distinct from one another.

Second, the distinction among the divine persons is not to be understood in such a way that something common is divided among them. For their common essence remains undivided. Instead, the distinguishing elements must themselves constitute the distinct things. But it is the relations (or properties) that so constitute the hypostases (or persons) and make them distinct from one another as subsistent persons. Thus, the Paternity is the Father and the Filiation is the Son, since in God the abstract does not differ from the concrete. By contrast, it is contrary to the notion of an origin that it should constitute a hypostasis (or person). For since an origin is signified as an action, it is signified as proceeding from a subsisting person, and hence it presupposes that person. On the other hand, when an origin is signified passively, as in the case of ‘being begotten’, it is signified as a path (*via*) to a subsistent person and not yet as constituting it. Hence, it is better to say that it is by the relations, rather than by their origins, that the persons (or hypostases) are made distinct from one another. For even though they are distinct from one another in both these ways, nonetheless, in our manner of understanding they are distinct in a prior and more principal way through the relations.

Hence, the name ‘Father’ signifies not only the property but also the hypostasis, whereas the name ‘Begetter’ or ‘One that generates’ signifies only the property. For the name ‘Father’ signifies the relation that constitutes the hypostasis and makes it distinct, whereas names such as ‘One that generates’ and ‘Begotten’ signify origins, which do not constitute the hypostases or make them distinct from one another.

Reply to objection 1: The persons are the subsistent relations themselves. Hence, it is not incompatible with the simplicity of the divine persons that they should be made distinct from one another

through the relations.

Reply to objection 2: The persons are distinct not in the *esse* in which they subsist or in anything absolute, but only in that which is *with respect to another*. Hence, the relations are sufficient to make them distinct from one another.

Reply to objection 3: To the extent that a distinction is prior, it is closer to oneness and so should be a minimal distinction. Thus, the distinctions among the persons should derive only from that which makes them minimally distinct, viz., the relations.

Reply to objection 4: It is when a relation is an accident that it presupposes a distinction among the supposita. However, if the relation in question is subsistent, then it does not presuppose a distinction among the supposita but brings that distinction with it. For when it is claimed that the *esse* of a relation is to be related to another, it is the correlative thing that is understood by the word ‘another’, and the correlative thing is not prior in nature to its counterpart, but is instead simultaneous in nature with it.

Article 3

If the properties or relations are intellectually abstracted from the persons, do distinct hypostases still remain?

It seems that if the properties or relations are intellectually abstracted from the persons, distinct hypostases still remain:

Objection 1: That to which something is related by an addition can still be understood even if that which is added to it has been removed. For instance, *man* is related to *animal* by an addition, and *animal* can still be understood if *rational* is removed. But *person* is related to *hypostasis* by an addition, since a person is a hypostasis with a distinguishing property pertaining to dignity. Therefore, when the property pertaining to a person is removed from *person*, *hypostasis* is still understood.

Objection 2: The fact that the Father is the *Father* and the fact that the Father is *someone* (*aliquis*) do not derive from the same thing. For given that He is the *Father* by the Paternity, if He were also *someone* by the Paternity, then it would follow that the Son, in whom the Paternity does not exist, is not *someone*. Therefore, if the Paternity is intellectually removed from the Father, then it still remains true that He is *someone*—i.e., that He is a hypostasis. Therefore, even if the property is removed from the person, the hypostasis still remains.

Objection 3: In *De Trinitate* 5 Augustine says, “To say ‘unbegotten’ is not the same as saying ‘Father’, since even if He had not begotten the Son, nothing would prevent His being called unbegotten.” By contrast, if He had not begotten the Son, then the Paternity would not exist in Him. Therefore, even if the Paternity is removed, the hypostasis of the Father still remains as unbegotten.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 4 Hilary says, “The Son has nothing other than being begotten (*natum*).” But it is by being begotten (*nativitate*) that He is the Son. Therefore, if the Filiation is removed, the hypostasis of the Son does not remain. And the same line of reasoning holds for the other persons.

I respond: There are two kinds of intellectual abstraction. The first involves a universal’s being abstracted from a particular, in the way that *animal* is abstracted from *man*. The other involves a form’s being abstracted from matter, in the way that the figure of a circle is intellectually abstracted from all sensible matter. The difference between these two kinds of abstraction is that in the kind of abstraction that involves universals and particulars, that from which the abstraction is made does not remain; for instance, when the difference *rational* is removed from *man*, only *animal*—and not *man*—remains in the

intellect. By contrast, in the abstraction that involves form and matter, both of them remain in the intellect; for instance, when the figure of a circle is abstracted from bronze, the concept *circle* and the concept *bronze* remain separately in our intellect.

Now even though in God there is in reality no universal or particular and no matter or form, nonetheless, there is a likeness of them in God because of the mode of signifying. It is in accord with this mode that Damascene says, “What is common is the substance, and what is particular is the hypostasis.”

Thus, if we are talking about the kind of abstraction that involves universals and particulars, then when the properties are removed, what remains in our intellect is the common essence but not the hypostasis of the Father, which is a sort of particular.

On the other hand, if we are talking about the abstraction of form from matter, then when the properties that do not constitute the persons (*proprietates non personales*) are removed, the concepts of the hypostases (or persons) remain. For instance, if the fact that He is unbegotten or spirating is intellectually removed from the Father, then the hypostasis (or person) of the Father remains.

However, when a property that constitutes a person (*proprietas personalis*) is intellectually removed, then the concept of the hypostasis is removed as well. For the properties that constitute the persons are not thought of as coming to the divine hypostasis in the way that a form comes to a preexistent subject; instead, these properties bring their supposita along with them, since they are the subsisting persons themselves, in the way that the Paternity is the Father Himself. For ‘hypostasis’ signifies something distinct [from other hypostases] in God, since a hypostasis is an individual substance. Therefore, since, as has been explained (a. 2), it is the relations which make the hypostases distinct from one another and which constitute them, it follows that if the relations that constitute the persons are intellectually removed, then the hypostases do not remain.

However, as was explained above (a. 2), some claim that the hypostases in God are made distinct from one another not by their relations, but solely by their origins, with the result that the Father is understood to be a certain hypostasis by the fact that He is not from another, and the Son by the fact that He is from another through generation. By contrast, the relations that come [to the hypostases] as properties pertaining to dignity constitute the nature of a person and so are called personhoods (*personalitates*). Hence, when relations of this sort are intellectually removed, the hypostases remain, but not the persons.

But there are two reasons why this view cannot be true. First, as has been shown (a. 2), the relations constitute the hypostases and make them distinct from one another. Second, every hypostasis with a rational nature just is a person; this is clear from Boethius’s definition, according to which a person is an individual substance with a rational nature. Hence, in order for something to be a hypostasis and not a person, one would have to abstract the rationality of the nature and not the property constituting the person.

Reply to objection 1: *Person* does not add just *distinguishing property* to *hypostasis*; instead it adds *distinguishing property that pertains to dignity*, since this whole phrase must assume the place of the specific difference. Now a distinguishing property pertains to dignity insofar as it is understood as subsisting in a rational nature. Hence, when *distinguishing property* is removed from *person*, *hypostasis* does not remain—though *hypostasis* would remain if the rationality of the nature were removed. For a person, like a hypostasis, is an individual substance, and so in God the distinguishing relation is part of both concepts.

Reply to objection 2: By the Paternity the Father is not only the Father but also a person and a *someone*, i.e., a hypostasis. Nor it does not follow from this that the Son is not a *someone*, i.e., a hypostasis—just as it does not follow that He is not a person.

Reply to objection 3: Augustine’s intent was not to claim that the hypostasis of the Father would

remain as unbegotten if the Paternity were removed—as if Innascibility constituted the hypostasis of the Father and made Him distinct [from the other persons]. For this is impossible, since ‘unbegotten’ does not posit anything, but is instead predicated negatively, as Augustine himself explains.

Rather, Augustine is here making the general point that not everything that is unbegotten is a father. Therefore, when the Paternity is removed, the hypostasis of the Father does not remain in God in such a way that He is distinct from the other *persons*. Rather, it remains insofar as He is distinct from *creatures*, in the way that the Jews understood Him.

Article 4

Are the notional acts presupposed by the properties?

It seems that the notional acts are presupposed by the properties:

Objection 1: In 1 *Sentences*, dist. 27, the Master says, “The Father always exists because He has always begotten the Son.” And so it seems that the generation conceptually precedes the Paternity.

Objection 2: Every relation conceptually presupposes that which it is founded on, in the way that equality presupposes quantity. But the Paternity is a relation founded on the action that is the generation. Therefore, the Paternity presupposes the generation.

Objection 3: The nativity is related to the Filiation in the same way that the active generation is related to the Paternity. But the Filiation presupposes the nativity; for the Son is the Son because He is begotten. Therefore, the Paternity likewise presupposes the generation.

But contrary to this: The generation is an operation of the person of the Father. But the Paternity constitutes the person of the Father. Therefore, the Paternity is conceptually prior to the generation.

I respond: According to those who claim that the properties do not constitute the hypostases and make them distinct, but merely make manifest the hypostases as already constituted and distinct, it is absolutely necessary to claim that the relations are, according to our mode of understanding, posterior to the notional acts—so that it can simply be said that the Father is the Father because He generates.

However, if we assume that it is the relations that constitute the hypostases in God and make them distinct, then we must draw a distinction. For the origins in God are signified both actively and passively: (a) *actively*, in the way that the act of generating (*generatio*) is attributed to the Father and that the act of spirating (*spiratio*), taken as a notional act, is attributed to the Father and the Son; and (b) *passively*, in the way that being begotten (*nativitas*) is attributed to the Son and that proceeding (*processio*) is attributed to the Holy Spirit.

The origins as *passively* signified are conceptually prior in an absolute sense to the properties of the persons who proceed, even those properties that constitute them. For an origin, passively signified, is signified as a path (*via*) to the person who is constituted by the property.

Similarly, the origins as *actively* signified are conceptually prior to any relation which is had by the originating person but which is not constitutive of that person. For instance, the notional act of spirating conceptually precedes the unnamed relational property that is common to the Father and the Son.

However, the property that constitutes the person of the Father can be thought of in two ways:

(a) In one way, it is thought of insofar as it is a relation, and here, once again, it conceptually presupposes the notional act. For a relation as such is founded on an act.

(b) In the second way, it is thought of as constitutive of the person, and in this sense it must be the case that the relation is presupposed by the notional act, in the way that a person who is an agent is presupposed by his action.

Reply to objection 1: When the Master says that the Father is the Father because He generates, he is taking the name 'Father' insofar as it designates just the relation, but not insofar as it signifies the subsistent person. For when it is taken in the latter way, we must say, conversely, that the Father generates because He is the Father.

Reply to objection 2: This objection goes through with respect to the Paternity insofar as it is a relation, but not with respect to the Paternity insofar as it is constitutive of the person of the Father.

Reply to objection 3: Being begotten (*nativitas*) is a path to the person of the Son, and so it is conceptually prior to the Filiation, even insofar as the Filiation is constitutive of the person of the Son. However, the active generation is signified as proceeding from the person of the Father, and so it presupposes the personal property that constitutes the Father.